U.S. Naval Academy, Griffin Hall, Building 110
Parker & Decatur Rds.
Annapolis
Anne Arundel County
Maryland

HABS No. MD-329-9

HABS
MD,
2-ANNA,
65/9-

PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

Historic American Buildings Survey
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
Washington, D.C. 20240

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HISTORIC AMERICAN BUILDINGS SURVEY HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE NARRATIVE

Griffin Hall, Building #110
U.S. Naval Academy
Annapolis, Maryland

HABS No. MD-329-9

I. Documentation for Building

A. Historic Name.

The building was known initially as the Isherwood Hall Extension until it was designated Building #110 or Griffin Hall shortly after its completion. It has been known by no other names. The building was named after Rear Admiral Robert S. Griffin, USN, Chief of the Bureau of Steam Engineering during World War I.

B. Location.

Melville Hall is located at the intersection of Parker and Decatur Roads. It is attached to Building #104C, a Water Treatment Plant and then to Building #116 or Melville Hall to the northwest. To the northeast it is attached to and is in fact an extension of Building #104, Isherwood Hall. Griffin Hall is located within the United States Naval Academy, Annapolis, Anne Arundel County, Maryland 21402. The Universal Transverse Mercator Coordinates are: 18.371120.4315890.

C. Present Owner and Occupier.

United States Government.

D. Present Use.

Griffin Hall is vacant and unused. It is scheduled for demolition in the autumn of 1981. Through out its active life Griffin Hall contained classrooms and drafting space for the Department of Marine Engineering and Naval construction and its successors.

E. Significance

Griffin Hall was built in 1917 as an extension to Isherwood Hall by Flagg's disciple Jules de Sibour who had become consulting architect to the Academy. Griffin is a skinny rectangle (56' x 181') connected at its center by a two story hyphen to the southwest elevation of Isherwood. Not only does the principal facade of Griffin, its long southwestern elevation along Parker Road, mimic Flagg's side elevations for Isherwood; it is probable that Sibour simply reused the materials and ornament from Isherwood's central bay on the southwest which the hyphen now obscures. This central bay as utilized on both buildings is distinguished by double wood doors at the first story level and a carved relief sculpture of the Academy seal in place of a window at the second story level surmounted by a gable like break in the cornice line.

Griffin Hall has, of course, the same materials and scaling as Isherwood. As such it is compatible with Ernest Flagg's Beaux Arts classical style. It does not do anything however, for the axial symmetry of Flagg's Beaux Arts planning. It should be considered that Flagg was running out of room when he sited Isherwood so it is perhaps not surprising that Isherwood's extension was even more awkwardly placed. When the time came to expand again, the prospect of balancing Griffin with an addition to the opposite side of Isherwood was defeated by the shoreline of Dorsey Creek.

As with all the buildings of the Isherwood Complex, Griffin Hall's non-architectural significance lies in its association with the technological education of American naval officers and the expanding science of ship propulsion. However no significant research or technological discoveries are known to have occurred in the building.

II. Historical Information.

A. Physical History

1. Date of Erection: Records of the real estate department of the U.S. Naval Academy Public Works Office, orginal construction drawings, and a stone carving on the southeast side attest to the construction of the building in 1917.

2. Architect: Jules de Sibour, a one time employee of Flagg's New York office and subsequently consulting architect to the Naval Academy. Sibour is fairly well known for other Beaux Arts style projects, especially Washington, D.C. embassies.

3. Original and Subsequent Owners: United States Government.

4. Builder, Contractor, and Supplier: Unknown.

5. Original Plan and Construction: Bureau of Yards and Docks Drawings 70078 to 70093. Meduim is negative sepia. Contained in Roll #445 in the Naval Academy Public Works Archives.

6. Alternations and Additions: A review of Public Works plan files indicates that in 1953 a Wind Tunnel and a Physical and Metallurgical Laboratory were installed.

B. Historical Context.

Griffin Hall's construction was necessitated by the expansion of the student body at the Naval Academy. The design capacity for the facilities at the time of Flagg's original plan was five hundred midshipmen but there were already nine hundred by the time the rebuilding was completed. In terms of function the new spaces provided by Griffin appear to be more of the same: model room, drafting hall, and classrooms.

III. Architectural Information.

A. General Statement.

1. Architectural Character: Griffin is similar in materials, scale, and ornament to Isherwood Hall of which it is an extension. A basically utilitarian classroom building it has nothing comparable in exuberance or architectural interest to the monumental arched entrance of Isherwood. It is, as is mentioned in I.E., an almost mirror image of the northeastern or side elevation of Isherwood Hall. As such, it partakes in a very subdued way of the qualities of strength dignity, and symmetry which Flagg's Beaux Arts classicism brought to the Academy.

2. Condition of the Fabric: The basic masonry shell is in excellent condition. The interior is in good shape as well but suffers from an accumulation of bird droppings.

B. Description of Exterior.

1. Overall Dimensions: rectangular 56' x 281'. Two and one half stories.

2. Foundations: Wood piles. Live load capacity of the floors is 50 to 77 lbs. per square foot.

3. Walls: Molded granite water table. Masonry bearing walls, 1' 8" to 1' 10" thick of glazed gray brick laid is English bond.

4. Structural System, Framing: A standard steel frame structure of one way concrete joists with tile fillers.

5. Porches, Stoops, Balconies, Bulkheads: N/A.

6. Chimneys: N/A.

7. Openings.

a. Doorways and Doors: Stilted segmental brick arches with oversized granite keystones and granite skewbacks surmount openings containing double wood paneled doors with molded trim including festoons on uppermost panel, twelve light transom.

b. Windows and Shutters: Stilted segmental brick arches with oversized granite keystones and granite skewbacks surmount first story eighteen light, recessed, casement windows with twelve-light transoms. Flat brick arches top eighteen-light casement windows at the second story level. There are nine light pivotal windows at the third (half) story level.

8. Roof.

a. Shape, Covering: Hipped, slate roof with skylignts.

b. Cornice, eaves: Cornice with cast iron brackets or ancons below and bosses above separates second story from the half story above and forms a gable over principal entrances.

c. Dormers, Cupolas, Towers: N/A.

C. Description of Interior.

1. Floor Plans:

a. First Floor: At the time of writing the 56' x 181' rectangle of Griffin Hall contained one large open space. 1960 District Public Works Office plans label this area as "Electrical Shop" and show small areas near the corridor to Isherwood occupied by an "Instrument Room" and Switch Board. Public Works Archives drawings of the period shortly after Griffin's construction show a slightly different configuration. One third of the rectangle toward the southeast is partitioned off into a "Model Room" while the remaining two thirds is identified as a"Pattern Shop".

b. Second Floor: This floor has a central corridor which is surrounded by twelve classrooms. In earlier drawings they are described as "section rooms" i.e. classrooms and instructors offices.

c. Third Floor: The attic and half story level is identified on drawings of all periods as a "Drafting Room". The excellent natural light provided by the monitors and skylights must have made it excellent for this purpose.

2. Stairways: The hyphen to Isherwood contains a wide stairway which resembles Isherwood's although the iron balustrade is simpler and the stairway continues in only one direction above the central landing.

3. Flooring: Floor system of oneway concrete joists with tile filler. Oak floors in classrooms.

4. Wall and Ceiling Finish: Variously plaster and wood.

5. Openings:

a. Doorways and doors: double wood doors with molded trim at principal entrances.

b. Windows: Eighteen light casement windows with twelve light transoms at first story level. Eighteen light casement windows at second story level. Nine light pivotal windows at half story level, skylights, and two monitors.

6. Decorative Features and Trim: N/A.

7. Hardware: Blackboards.

8. Mechanical Equipment: See "Isherwood Complex Documentation Appendix A: August, 1980 Survey of Existing Plumbing, Fire Protection, Electrical and HVAC Systems by Shooshanian Associates, Consulting Engineers.

D. Site.

1. General Setting and Orientation: Griffin Hall as stated above, would have been a logical extension of Isherwood according to the axial principles of Beaux Arts planning only if it had been balanced by a corresponding addition on the other flank of Isherwood. Due to the proximity of Dorsey Creek, this was impossible. With the Isherwood Shop Building, Building #104A tacked onto the rear of Isherwood, Griffin's site was the only choice left to Sibour.

2. Historic landscape design: N/A.

3. Outbuildings: N/A.

IV. Sources of Information

A. Orignial Architectural Drawings: Sibour's original drawings are labeled "Extension to Isherwood". They are right reading negative sepias in the Naval Academy Public Works Archive, Roll #445, Nos. 7008, 70090, 70093. See "Isherwood Complex Documentation Appendix C: General Bibiography".

B. Early Views: N/A.

C. Interviews: N/A.

D. Bibliography: See "Isherwood complex Documentation Appendix C: General Bibliography".

E. Likely Sources Not Investigated: N/A.

F. Supplemental Material: Naval Academy Real Estate Property Record Card 200132. See "Isherwood Complex Documentation Appendix C: General Bibliography".

V. Project Information.

Girffin Hall is to be demolished in the autumn of 1981 to clear a site for the future construction of a new multipurpose assembly facility for the Naval Academy.

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